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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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R 242035Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9301
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GT
SUBJ: ELECTORAL FRAUD CHARGES

1. SUMMARY: THE ALLEGED PRESENCE OF 28,000 DEAD PERSONS ON THE ELECTORAL ROLLS IN ONLY THE LATEST OF A VARIETY OF ANOMALIES RAISED IN CONNECTION WITH THE MARCH 5 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. LIKELY IT IS A MATTER OF PURGING THE LISTS OF THE DECEASED SINCE THE PREVIOUS ELECTION, BUT IT WILL PROBABLY BE BANDIED ABOUT QUITE A WHILE BEFORE IT IS ALLOWED TO DIE. ALL PARTIES HAVE MADE CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES OF ELECTORAL FRAUD, BUT CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO DATE IS SKIMPY. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE PERALTA MENDEZ HAS WARNED THAT A FRAUDULENT ELECTORAL RESULT WOULD MEAN "CIVIL WAR." DEFENSE MINISTER SPIEGELER HAS DECLARED THAT NOT ONLY IS THE ARMY "APOLITICAL," BUT ALSO LACKS ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING PURITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

2. PERHAPS A PROBLEM AS SERIOUS AS FRAUD IS THE MATTER OF VOTER AND CAMPAIGNER ATTITUDES. IF FRAUD CHARGES ARE
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BELIEVED BY ENOUGH PEOPLE, THEY COULD SERIOUSLY IMPAIR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, CLOUD THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, AND THUS DENY GUATEMALA THE PERIOD OF PEACE AND SPIRITUAL REGENERATION ALL CANDIDATES SAY IT NEEDS. END SUMMARY.

3. THE EXCHANGES OF CHARGES AND COUNTERCHARGES OF ELECTORAL FRAUD ARE REMINISCENT OF THE CHILDREN'S GAME, "BUTTON,

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BUTTON, WHO'S GOT THE BUTTON?" CHARGES ARE MET WITH DENIALS; SOME CHARGES ARE CLEARLY INTENTIONAL MISCONCEPTIONS. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HOLDING POLITICAL JOBS ARE ATTACKED FOR SUPPORTING THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE EVEN THOUGH THE PARTY TO WHICH THEY BELONG IS IN THE OPPOSITION. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, THE "OFFICIAL" VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HAS IN DOUBTFUL SERIOUSNESS JOINED THE CHORUS CHARGING FRAUD.

4. THE FOCUS OF MANY OF THESE ATTACKS IS THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY, WHOSE HEAD, ARTURO MALDONADO DE LA CERDA (MLN), IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL. THE COUNCIL ALSO INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES OF EACH OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES PLUS A REPRESENTATIVE (MLN) OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE (WHICH ADVISES THE PRESIDENT). THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL IS THE RULEMAKER AND -- EXCEPT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WHICH CONSTITUTIONALLY ARE ADJUDGED BY THE CONGRESS -- CONFIRMER OF THE ELECTORAL RESULT. THE REGISTER PROVIDES THE MACHINERY, MAKES UP THE VOTER ROLLS AND CARRIES OUT THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. MALDONADO'S CHARACTER IS VARIOUSLY VIEWED. EITHER HE IS CONSIDERED LOYAL TO THE PRESIDENT WHO APPOINTED HIM (LAUGERUD) AND IS THUS IS WILLING TO SUPPORT THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE (BEING THEREFORE DISLOYAL TO HIS OWN PARTY, THE MLN); OR HE IS DECLARED TO BE AN MLN ACTIVIST READY TO PERPETRATE FRAUD ON HIS PARTY'S BEHALF.

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5. MALDONADO HAS HAD TO ANSWER A VARIETY OF COMPLAINTS. SOME SEEMINGLY HAVE BEEN INNOCENT: A SECRETARY DISCARDS A VOTER REGISTRATION FORM WITH AN INCORRECT ENTRY. THE FORM IS LATER RETRIEVED AND USED BY OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS AS "EVIDENCE" OF A CONSPIRACY TO PAD THE VOTER ROLLS. THE LEADERS CHARGE THAT THE FORMS WERE GOING TO BE REPRODUCED IN HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS OF COPIES AND FILLED IN WITH FALSE IDENTITIES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT MALDONADO HAS NOT MERITED SUSPICION UNJUSTLY. HE HAS BEEN THE INSTRUMENT FOR HOLDING UP RECOGNITION OF MORE THAN HALF A DOZEN GROUPS SEEKING STATUS AS POLITICAL PARTIES. TO DO THIS HE HAS USED ONE LEGAL PRETEXT OR ANOTHER. IT IS EASY THEREFORE TO SEE HIM IN THE ROLE OF CONSPIRATOR. IT IS LESS CLEAR WHOSE INSTRUMENTALITY HE IS.

6. THE PRINCIPAL ACCUSER HAS BEEN GENERAL RICARDO PERALTA MENDEZ (DCG). FOR SOME TIME HE AND HIS FELLOW CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE BEEN MAKING CHARGES OF ELECTORAL TAMPERING AND DEMANDING THAT THE PRESIDENT GUARANTEE THAT THE "WINNER" OF THE ELECTION BE ALLOWED TO TAKE OFFICE. MORE RECENTLY HE HAS EXPRESSED HIS PLEASURE OVER PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S VIEWS ON THE NEED FOR CLEAN ELECTIONS, BUT NOT WITHOUT

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ADDING THE CAVEAT THAT "THE FACTS WE HAVE PRESENTED SHOW THAT
NOT ALL OF HIS (LAUGERUD'S) ORDERS ARE BEING ADHERED TO."
THE "FACTS" INCLUDE THE ALLEGATION THAT OTHER PARTIES HAVE
BEEN INSTRUCTING VOTERS (WHO MAY WISH TO EXPRESS A PROTEST)
HOW TO NULLIFY THEIR BALLOTS. IF MARKED AS INSTRUCTED, THE
DCG CHARGES, THE BALLOTS COULD LATER BE INTERPRETED TO BE
FOR THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE (LUCAS), SINCE CURRENT RULES
DO NOT MAKE CLEAR WHAT MARK INVALIDATES A BALLOT.

7. PERALTA MENDEZ HAS ALSO CHARGED THAT THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION PRINTED PROPAGANDA MATERIAL FOR LUCAS. THE
MINISTRY, NOTING IT LACKED THE KIND OF PRESS USED, DENIED THE
CHARGE. LUCAS' RUNNING MATE, VILLAGRAN KRAMER, GAVE THE
NAME AND ADDRESS OF THEIR PRINTER AND SUGGESTED THE PRESS
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MAKE INQUIRIES THERE.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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----------036104 250738Z /20
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INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
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8. THE MLN HAS SHARED SOME CHARGES WITH THE DCG AND
FORMULATED SOME NEW ONES. AMONG THE FORMER IS THE CHARGE
THAT A GUATEL (NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGENCY) PLANE

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WHICH CRASHED RECENTLY HAD BEEN USED TO TRANSPORT MEMBERS OF THE LUCAS CAMPAIGN PARTY AND DELIVER PROPAGANDA MATERIAL. THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS RETORTED PERSUASIVELY THAT THE PLANE WAS ON A MISSION OF AIRPORT INSPECTION WHEN IT CRASHED.

9. THE MLN HAS BEEN WORKING HARD TO ESTABLISH ITS CASE THAT GUATEL IS THE MECHANISM FOR AN ELECTORAL CONSPIRACY AND THAT IT WILL BE USED TO DEFRAUD THE VOTERS. SPECIFICALLY, IT HAS CHARGED THAT THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY HAS A CONTRACT WITH GUATEL TO USE ITS COMPUTERS TO TABULATE THE VOTES, BUT THAT THE COMPUTERS WILL BE MANIPULATED TO FAVOR LUCAS. VILLAGRAN KRAMER DEADPANNED THAT IF THERE IS FRAUD IT MUST BE IN MLN CAMP SINCE MALDONADO WHO HEADS THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY IS "UNDER THE DISCIPLINE OF THAT PARTY." GUATEL INSISTS AND THE REGISTRY CONFIRMS THAT THE FORMER'S JOB IS LIMITED TO COMPUTER PRINT-OUT LISTS OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS. MEANWHILE MALDONADO NOT SURPRISINGLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS COME TO BE AT ODDS WITH SOME MLN MEMBERS OVER INSINUATIONS THAT HE IS MIXED UP IN A CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD THE VOTERS.

10. ANOTHER COMPLAINT, BUT WITH DCG AND MLN SINGING DIFFERENT TUNES, IS THAT OF CENTRALIZING ELECTION RESULTS. THE HEAD OF THE MLN, VICE PRESIDENT SANDOVAL, HAS CALLED FOR OFFICIAL VOTE TALLIES TO BE GIVEN OUT ONLY BY THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL. HE MAINTAINS THAT WHEN SUCH INFORMATION COMES OUT PIECEMEAL FROM THE LOCAL ELECTORAL BOARDS THERE IS TOO MUCH CONFUSION AND MISINFORMATION. THE DCG OPPOSES THIS AND WANTS RESULTS ANNOUNCED LOCALLY ON A PRELIMINARY BASIS. ADDING TO THE MUDDLE IS ANOTHER CHARGE FROM UNSPECIFIED SOURCES THAT THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF OFFICIAL MEDIA TO ANNOUNCE ELECTION RESULTS IS BEING CONSIDERED. THE PRESIDENT QUICKLY PLACATED THE PRESS. HE DENIED THAT GOVERNMENT MEDIA WOULD MONOPOLIZE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS AND STATED THAT THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA WOULD HAVE PROMPT AND OPEN ACCESS TO ELECTION RESULTS. WHAT IS NOT YET CLEAR IS WHETHER LOCAL BOARDS WILL ANNOUNCE PRELIMINARY RESULTS. IN 1974 THEY WERE INTERRUPTED FROM DOING SO. THE FINAL TALLY WAS ANNOUNCED IN THE CAPITAL WITH NO BREAKDOWN PROVIDED. THIS LED DIRECTLY TO THE CHARGE OF FRAUD BY THE DCG IN THAT ELECTION, WHEN ACCORDING TO DCG TALLIES THEIR CANDIDATE RECEIVED OVER HALF THE TOTAL VOTE.

11. ONE OF THE MOST RECENT COMPLAINTS BY THE DCG IS THAT 28,000 DEAD PERSONS ARE INCLUDED ON THE ELECTORAL ROLLS. THE DCG MAYORAL CANDIDATE, VINICIO CEREZO, MENTIONED EXAMPLES OF DECEASED INCLUDED ON THE ROLLS. HE CITED A PAGE NUMBER TAKEN FROM A NOTE HE MAINTAINS HE RECEIVED FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE CIVIL REGISTRAR. THE SECRETARY HAD BEEN PROMISED, SO THE STORY GOES, THAT HER HUSBAND WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE ELECTORAL SLATE OF THE PARTY PRESENTLY IN CHARGE OF THE GUATEMALAN

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MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT (FUR). WHEN HIS NAME WAS SCRATCHED, THE
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WIFE PURPORTEDLY DECIDED TO TELL CEREZO ABOUT THE PLAN TO PAD
THE ELECTORAL ROLLS. SHE DENIED THIS TO REPORTERS AND
ASSERTED SHE RECEIVED ANOTE FROM CEREZO OFFERING HER MONEY TO
VERIFY CEREZO'S ACCUSATION, WHICH SHE STATES IS FALSE. ACCOR-
DING TO CEREZO, THE FUR HAS SIDED WITH THE LUCAS CAMP AND
PLANNED TO USE FALSE ID CARDS TO HAVE BALLOTS CAST IN THE NAMES
OF THE DEAD PERSONS. THE CIVIL REGISTRAR SAYS 23,000 DEAD
PERSONS HAVE BEEN DELETED FROM VOTER ROLLS UP TO MAY 1976. HE
WOULD PROVIDE THE ELECTORAL REGISTRAR THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO
HAD DIED THROUGH THE END OF LAST YEAR. THE OFFICE THAT ISSUES
ID CARDS SAID THE CARDS OF ALL THE DECEASED HAVE BEEN CANCELWED.
THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY HAS ASKED FOR A LIST OF DECEASED FOR THE
PAST TEN YEARS AND PROMISED TO INVESTIGATE. THE CIVIL REGIS-
TRAR EXPLAINED TO REPORTERS THAT TRYING TO CARRY OUT A FRAUD
OX THE TYPE ALLEGED WOULD B
A MONUMENTAL AND COSTLY JOB.
IDS WITH CERTIFICATION, PHOTOS, FINGERPRINTS, AND TAX STAMPS
WOULD COST ABOUT $50,000 AND REQUIRE THE HELP OF AN ENORMOUS
NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THE IDS ARE NEEDED SINCE THEY MUST BE
PRESENTED TO ELECTORAL OFFICIALS PRIOR TO VOTING.

12. RESPONDING TO CAMPAIGN INNUENDO FROM THE PERALTA MENDEZ
CAMP, DEFENSE MINISTER SPIEGELER RELEASED A SPECIAL BULLETIN
AFFIRMING THE ARMY'S "APOLITICAL" NATURE WHILE REJECTING THE
NOTION THAT THE ARMY HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO GUARANTY THE
CORRECTNESS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

13. COMMENT: THE CHARGES OF FRAUD TO DATE HAVE BEEN REBUTTED
MORE OR LESS PLAUSIBLY BY MOST OF THE OSTENSIBLE CULPRITS.
NEVERTHELESS, THEY HAVE THE EFFECT OF COMPOUNDING THE PREVAILING
CYNICISM, AND PREPARE THE GROUND FOR CHALLENGING THE ELECTORAL
RESULT, PARTICULARLY IF LUCAS IS DECLARED THE WINNER. DURING
PERALTA MENDEZ' PRESS CONFERENCE LAST WEEK, THE DCG CANDIDATE
SOUNDED AN OMINOUS NOTE: "I HOPE THAT THOSE WHO RUN THE
GOVERNMENT HAVE ENOUGH GOOD SENSE NOT TO PERPETRATE A FRAUD,
BECAUSE IN THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENT THE PEOPLE WILL NOT ALLOW
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THEMSELVES TO BE CHEATED; IT WOULD MEAN CIVIL WAR." ON THE
OTHER HAND, THE CHARGES MAY SERVE A USEFUL PURPOSE OF FOCUSSING
ENOUGH ATTENTION ON THE GENUINE RISK OF FRAUD FOR WOULD-BE
MANIPULATORS TO PONDER LONG AND HARD BEFORE PROCEEDING.
ANDREWS

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3490736
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTORAL FRAUD CHARGES
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/20d438d0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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